



**Hospitals, Obstetric services
25 May 2005**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Can the Minister for Health please advise the house what steps the government is taking to reinstate obstetric services in regional hospitals? Around 20 pregnant women in the Cummins district have been advised that obstetric services at their local hospital have been suspended. This comes on top of the withdrawal of obstetric services in nearby Tumby Bay two years ago, and also at Wudinna, with only a partial service now reinstated at Ceduna. Concerns have been raised with me about the effect the withdrawal of these essential services is having on our regional communities and also on the Port Lincoln hospital service.

The Hon. L. STEVENS (Minister for Health): I thank the member for Flinders for the question.

The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The deputy leader has been here long enough to know standing orders.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: Sir, if the fellow wants to repeat that on the record, I take a matter of privilege. He is completely and utterly not telling the truth.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health has the call.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON: To help, I referred to the member for Flinders and said, 'They do not waste a safe seat, do they?', and I was being sarcastic.

The SPEAKER: We will leave it there. The Minister for Health.

The Hon. L. STEVENS: Thank you, sir. The provision of obstetric services in country areas, and particularly the more remote areas of the country, is a considerable issue and a considerable challenge, not only here in South Australia but also across Australia. Indeed, the shortage of obstetricians is a national and international problem, and there are considerable challenges for governments all over the place in terms of being able to provide those services as close as possible to where people live.

That being said, the government will be looking at a range of models for the delivery of maternity services in country areas and, in fact, that is something that we will be embarking upon over the coming months. We will be particularly looking not only at where the services are reducing but also at certain areas of country South Australia where births are increasing, and we need to look at mechanisms to enhance those services. One of those areas is Roxby Downs, where with the expansion of the mine there will be a—

The Hon. Dean Brown interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member is out of order. He has been in here a long time and he knows the rules.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: He should retire; he has been here too long. And he has spent more time as premier with no majority—

The SPEAKER: And the Minister for Transport is out of order.

The Hon. P.F. Conlon: Talk about a loser.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health has the call.

The Hon. L. STEVENS: There will be a need to plan for the future expansion of services there. So, in a nutshell, the issue is a challenge for all governments. We would be expecting support from the federal government in relation to work force changes. We will also be working in relation to specific areas in country South Australia where services will be centred, and Port Lincoln will be one of those areas reaching out into the Eyre Peninsula. We will also be looking at expanding the models of care for maternity services. We will be looking at expanding midwifery care models and, hopefully in the future, the use of nurse practitioners, providing an extra link in a team of health professionals. All those things will be employed to try to put those very necessary services as far as possible across the state

